**Lesson Five: The Weimar Republic and the Nazi State – The Challenges faced by the Social Democrat Government in 1919 and the Treaty of Versailles**

**Learning Intentions:**

Students will understand the depth of the ‘stab-in-the-back” theoryand how it could undermine the Social Democrats success as leaders of the Weimar Republic.

**Success Criteria:**

Students will understand how the “stab in the back” theory became linked to anti Communism, anti Socialism and anti-Semitism.

Recap//

8 August 1918 the Kaiserschlacht the “Emperor of battles” sank in the mud of France. It became known as Der Schwarze Tag – the Black Day.

Fresh Allied American reinforcements and new tanks arrived.

The German army began to crumble.

Hindenburg and Ludendorff, the German commanders on the Western Front, demanded that fighting stop before their army broke up.

The German generals seemed to see it as a “strategic withdrawal”. The German army was not “stabbed in the back” if anything, it was groping for a neutral corner.

General Groener felt that an easier peace could be won without the Kaiser, so he withdrew army support from the Crown/Monarchy.

Kaiser William II of Hohenzollern, King of Prussia, German Emperor and a symbol of German unity and social stability, was forced to abdicate.

Over 400 years of political tradition were discarded by the very army that the Hohenzollerns and Bismarck had cherished.

**Task One: Read the following quotation from a letter from Von Hindenburg to the German Chancellor on the 2 October 1918. This has been quoted in a book by Wheeler-Bennett, J., entitled The Wooden Titan, published by Macmillan, in 1936.**

Task One questions:

1. What is the tone of Hindenburg’s letter to the Chancellor?
2. What is he begging the Chancellor to do?

…*because of the impossibility of making good our very heavy losses in the battles of the last few days, there no longer exists any prospect according to human calculation, of forcing peace upon our enemies. The enemy is regularly bringing new and fresh reserves into action… it is imperative to stop fighting in order to spare the German people at its allies further useless sacrifices.*

Woodrow Wilson, the American President, wanted to spread democracy, so the German army saw an advantage in using the Social Democrat Party.

They resorted to Wilson’s “Fourteen Points” to avoid the same sorts of terms that they had inflicted on the Russians when they beat them earlier in the war.

They under-estimated, however, Clemenceau and the millions of Frenchmen, whose deaths called for vengeance!

Making the Social Democrats responsible for handling the defeat had the advantage of relieving the army leaders from any further blame.

By November 1918, the Navy and Communist groups were starting revolts in Germany itself.

Groener handed everything over to the Social Democrats, Ebert and Scheidemann, leaving them to cope with the chaos.

**Task Two: Google**

1. Who was Hindenburg and what was his career during WW1 and in the Weimar Republic?
2. Who was Ludendorff Erich Ludendorff and what was his career during WW1 and in Hitler’s rise to power?
3. Who was Groener.?
4. What was his role in transferring Germany into the hands of the Social Democrats at the end of WW1?
5. Who did he make a secret pact with in order to prevent the Communists creating their own Communist Germany?
6. Who was Ebert? How did he maintain the German army’s importance to the stability of German politics after the war?

The Social Democrats then became the scapegoats.

They were accused of betraying the army and of being socialistic Jewish traitors.

**The links between anti-Semitism, Socialism and Communism**

Medieval Christians emphasized the role of the Jews in the death of Christ.

Every Easter people were reminded of this, and it led to persecution.

Jewish communities were scattered minorities in Europe and tempting targets for those wanting someone to blame for any problems!

**Task Three: Google**

1. What is the time frame for Medieval Europe?
2. What does the term Medieval mean?
3. Read the section on Christian persecution of the Jews in: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persecution_of_Jews> .
4. Read through <http://www.religioustolerance.org/jud_pers3.htm> and record FOUR impressions from this information.

**The links between anti-Semitism, Socialism and Communism continued…**

Karl Marx, the founder of Communism, was born Jewish (but later became an atheist). People feared that Socialist and Communist theories might threaten their livelihood.

They blamed the Jews, taking advantage of peoples’ traditional anti-Jewish prejudices.

Leon Trotsky (Lev Bronstein), a Russian Communist revolutionary, was also born Jewish. This seemed to confirm the dangers of a Jewish plot in the minds of some.

**Task Four**

1. What country was Karl Marx from? What education did he receive?
2. Whose livelihoods could be threatened by Socialists or Communists taking over?
3. Read through this article and explain what its authors are suggesting <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashkenazi_intelligence>

**Task Five**

Read the following statement from Hindenburg made to a Committee of Enquiry in November 1919.

Answer the questions below.

*In spite of the superiority of the enemy in men and materials, we could have brought the struggle to a favourable conclusion if determined and unanimous cooperation had existed between the army and those at home. But while the enemy showed an ever greater will for victory, divergent party interests began to show themselves with us. These circumstances soon led to a breaking up of our will to conquer… The German army was stabbed in the back.*

This excerpt was also from Wheeler-Bennett, J’s Hindenburg: The Wooden Titan.

1. In just over a year Hindenburg has found a new explanation for the German failure to win the war. Explain with a quote from both Task One and Task Five.

**Task Six**

Read the following quote by Scheidemann which appears in T.L. Jarman’s The Rise and Fall of Nazi Germany, published by Cresset Press in 1955.

Answer the questions below.

The guilty consciences of those laden with guilt later invented the ‘stab in the back’. The collapse was not the result of revolution; it was the other way about; without the collapse, the revolution that broke out six weeks later would probably not have occurred.

1. What “collapse” is Scheidemann referring to?

**Task Seven**

Read the following quote from Hitler’s Mein Kampf, as published in the Hutchinson Encyclopedia in 1969.

Answer the questions below:

And so it had all been in vain. In vain all the sacrifices and privations, in vain the hunger and thirst of months which were often endless …did all this happen only so a gang of wretched criminals could lay hands on the fatherland …Kaiser Wilehlm II had been the first German Emperor to proffer the hand of friendship to the Marxists …While they still held the emperor’s hand in theirs the other hand was reaching for a dagger … you cannot make a pact with Jews.

1. What are privations?
2. Who does he think are the “wretched criminals”?
3. How can we tell that Hitler has linked (whether in his mind or for propaganda purposes – *or both!*) those in control of the Weimar Republic after WW1 with the communist Russia?
4. Which of Hindenburg’s two statements do you think Hitler would have preferred to believe and why?

**Task Eight**

View this and try not to throw something at the computer

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lz3gdcn9f90